

Message Text

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USADB

EO 11652:NA
TAGS: EGEN, ETRD, ADB
SUBJECT: PROCUREMENT PROPOSAL

REF: (A) STATE 212258, (B) MANILA 13071

THE FOLLOWING PARAGRAPHS RESPOND POINT BY POINT TO THE
PROPOSALS SUGGESTED IN REF A:

1. PARA 2(A) PROCEDURES: USADB AGREES THAT IT WOULD BE
USEFUL FOR THE BANK TO REVIEW ITS BIDDING PROCEDURES
REGARDING TOTAL COST PRICING VS INITIAL COST PRICING.
WHILE WE ARE NOT CERTAIN THAT SUFFICIENT WORLD-WIDE
MAINTENANCE DATA ARE CURRENTLY AVAILABLE TO THE ADB TO
JUSTIFY CHANGING TO TOTAL COST PRICING, WE BELIEVE IT
IS APPROPRIATE FOR THE ADB TO BEGIN TO THINK ABOUT WAYS
OF INCORPORATING LONG-RUN ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL GAINS
INTO ITS BIDDING PROCEDURES. CLEARLY THIS PROPOSAL WILL
RUN INTO OPPOSITION FROM THOSE COUNTRIES WHO REGARD
THEMSELVES AS LOWER PRICE BIDDERS. REGARDING 60-DAY
BID DEADLINES, WE COULD ASK THE BANK TO STUDY THE EFFECTS
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OF USING A LONGER BID DEADLINE, ALTHOUGH THE ENTIRE
THRUST OF BANK'S EFFORTS SUPPORTED BY DEVELOPING MEMBER
COUNTRIES IS TO SPEED UP IMPLEMENTATION OF LOANS RATHER
THAN LENGTHEN THE ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESS.

2. PARA 2(B) STAFF CONTACTS: USADB AGREES THAT INCREASED
CONTACT BETWEEN BANK STAFF AND AMERICAN FIRMS WOULD BE

VERY USEFUL. AS PART OF USADB NORMAL OPERATIONS, WE MEET WITH ALL BUSINESSMEN WHO REQUEST APPOINTMENTS, AS WELL AS ARRANGE MEETINGS BETWEEN BUSINESSMEN AND APPROPRIATE ADB PERSONNEL. (UP TO NOW THE MAJORITY OF AMERICAN BUSINESSMEN VISITING ADB HAVE BEEN CONSULTANTS.) THE SUGGESTION THAT A BANK TEAM VISIT KEY BUSINESS GROUPS AND CITIES IN THE US SEEMS TO US TO BE A GOOD ONE. IN ORDER TO MAXIMIZE BENEFIT OF A POSSIBLE VISIT AND TO JUSTIFY THE SUBSTANTIAL EXPENSE BY THE ADB, WE BELIEVE IT IMPORTANT THAT THE COMMERCE DEPT ATTACH A HIGH PRIORITY TO PROGRAMMING THIS VISIT INCLUDING EFFECTIVE BACKSTOPPING BY THE COMMERCE FIELD OFFICES. REGARDING THE OTHER POINTS IN PARA 2B: FIRST, WHILE PRESS RELEASES DO PROVIDE SOME PROCUREMENT INFORMATION WE DO NOT BELIEVE ENCOURAGING US FIRMS TO SUBSCRIBE TO BANK PRESS RELEASES WOULD BE PARTICULARLY USEFUL. (THERE ARE ALREADY OVER 2,000 AMERICAN ADDRESSEES RECEIVING THE PRESS RELEASES.) WE BELIEVE THAT FOCUSING ON THE MOI, WHICH HAS BEEN DECLASSIFIED BY THE BANK AND IS NOW AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC ON A SUBSCRIPTION BASIS, IS PREFERABLE BECAUSE IT GIVES FIRMS MORE LEAD TIME TO PREPARE BIDS AND TALK TO EXECUTING AGENCIES THAN PRESS RELEASES WHICH APPEAR ONLY AFTER PROJECT APPROVAL. U.S. FIRMS MAY ALSO BE INTERESTED IN OBTAINING THE BUSINESS EDITION OF THE DEVELOPMENT FORUM, WHICH LISTS BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES IN IFI FUNDED PROJECTS. THIS PUBLICATION IS ALSO AVAILABLE ON A SUB-LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SCRIPTION BASIS. SECOND, USADB WOULD BE PLEASED TO ASSIGN ITS OFFICERS TO SPEAK TO AMERICAN BUSINESS GROUPS IN THE REGION IF MUTUALLY AGREED UPON SCHEDULES COULD BE DEVELOPED AND PROVISION MADE FOR ADDITIONAL TRAVEL EXPENDITURES. THIRD, WE WILL, OF COURSE, CONTINUE TO FACILITATE US BUSINESS CONTACTS WITH STAFF AND RESPOND TO QUERIES FOR INFORMATION. FOURTH, WE WILL CONTINUE TO DISCUSS WITH MANAGEMENT WAYS TO RECRUIT AMERICANS FOR STAFF POSITIONS.

3. PARA 2 (C) PROPOSED STUDY: FRANKLY, USADB DOUBTS WHETHER MUCH WOULD BE GAINED BY UNDERTAKING SUCH A STUDY AS PRESENTLY OUTLINED. AS INDICATED IN OUR EARLIER ANALYSIS (REF B) OF THE PROCUREMENT STATISTICS, US FIRMS HAVE WON A SURPRISINGLY HIGH PERCENTAGE OF CONTRACTS ON WHICH THEY BID. WE WONDER WHETHER THE PROPOSED EXAMINATION OF PROJECTS ON WHICH THERE WERE NO US BIDDERS WOULD ENABLE THE INVESTIGATORS TO DETERMINE DEFINITELY WHY US FIRMS WERE UNINTERESTED IN BIDDING OR DID NOT BELIEVE IT TO BE WORTH THE EFFORT. WE ALSO DOUBT WHETHER AN ADDITIONAL EXAMINATION IS NECESSARY TO DETERMINE WHY THOSE US BIDDERS WHO DID BID WERE UNSUCCESSFUL. THE

STATISTICS APPEAR TO INDICATE THAT HIGHER PRICE AND LACK OF RESPONSIVENESS TO TENDER REQUIREMENTS WERE THE DOMINANT FACTORS.

4. WASHINGTON MIGHT WISH TO CONSIDER A REVISED STUDY WHICH WOULD INVOLVE OBTAINING A LIST OF PROCUREMENT AWARDS ON WHICH THERE WERE NO AMERICAN OR FEW AMERICAN BIDS. QUALIFIED US FIRMS WOULD THEN BE APPROACHED TO DETERMINE WHETHER THEY WERE AWARE OF THE POTENTIAL CONTRACTS, WOULD HAVE BEEN INTERESTED IF THEY HAD KNOWN OF THE PROSPECTIVE AWARDS, AND WOULD HAVE BEEN CAPABLE OF MATCHING THE WINNING BID IF THEY HAD MADE THE EFFORT.

5. IF WASHINGTON DOES, HOWEVER, DECIDE TO UNDERTAKE THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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STUDY AS OUTLINED IN STATE 212258, THE USADB REGRETS THAT IT DOES NOT HAVE THE MANPOWER TO UNDERTAKE THE ASSIGNMENT. SINCE MOST OF THE SIGNIFICANT INFORMATION WILL BE IN THE HANDS OF THE INDIVIDUAL EXECUTING AGENCIES (WHO ACTUALLY MAKE THE BULK OF THE PROCUREMENT DECISIONS), THE INQUIRIES, TO BE MOST FRUITFUL, SHOULD BE MADE OF THE EXECUTING AGENCIES IN THE INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES. SUCH A STUDY SHOULD BE CAREFULLY STRUCTURED AND EXPLAINED, FOR

IT IS NOT INCONCEIVABLE THAT THE COUNTRIES CONCERNED MIGHT BE RELUCTANT TO ASSIST UNITED STATES OFFICIALS "REVIEW" THE PROCUREMENT DECISIONS OF THEIR EXECUTING AGENCIES. THE US SHOULD MAKE CLEAR THAT IT WOULD NOT BE ATTEMPTING TO MAKE THE INDIVIDUAL EXECUTING AGENCIES JUSTIFY THEIR DECISIONS.

6. PARA 2 (D) PROCUREMENT OFFICER: AS WASHINGTON AGENCIES ARE AWARE, THE USADB IN THE PAST HAS BEEN UNENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT THE SUGGESTION THAT AN ADDITIONAL OFFICER BE ASSIGNED TO IT TO DEAL WITH PROCUREMENT ISSUES, PRIMARILY BECAUSE IT DID NOT BELIEVE THAT THE APPARENT INDIFFERENCE TO ADB PROCUREMENT POSSIBILITIES ON THE PART OF US FIRMS COULD BE CHANGED BY STATIONING ANOTHER OFFICER IN MANILA.
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7. THE SUBSTANTIALLY INCREASING DEMANDS BEING PLACED ON PROCUREMENT, HOWEVER, ARE PLACING EVER INCREASING RESTRAINTS ON OUR ABILITY TO DEAL WITH THE USADB'S OTHER TRADITIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES. IF WASHINGTON CONTINUES TO WISH THE USADB TO PLACE GREATER EMPHASIS ON THE QUESTION OF PROCUREMENT, IT IS CLEAR THAT WE WILL NEED AN ADDITIONAL OFFICER. ADDITIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES WOULD INCLUDE OBTAINING MORE DETAILED INFORMATION FROM BANK STAFF; SENDING OUT MORE DETAILED EARLY ALERT INFORMATION TO WASHINGTON AND TO OTHER POSTS; RESPONDING TO AN ALREADY SUBSTANTIALLY INCREASED NUMBER OF REQUESTS FROM WASHINGTON FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION; SERVING AS A CONTACT POINT FOR AMERICAN BUSINESS VISITORS WITH ADB STAFF PERSONNEL; AND FOLLOWING UP ON OUTSTANDING CONTACTS AND COMPLAINTS. SUCH AN OFFICER SHOULD ALSO BE GIVEN THE RESPONSIBILITY OF BEING SUPPORTIVE TO US MISSIONS IN THE ASIAN COUNTRIES, NOT ONLY FOR ADB PROJECT PROCUREMENT BUT FOR BUSINESS POSSIBILITIES THAT RESULT FROM THE PROCUREMENT DECISIONS UNDERTAKEN UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF OTHER IFIS.

8. ADMINISTRATIVELY, WE BELIEVE THAT ANY SUCH OFFICER SHOULD REPORT TO THE USADB EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND NOT TO BOTH EMBASSY MANILA AND THE USADB. SUBSTANTIVELY, ALL OF HIS RESPONSIBILITIES WILL BE DEVELOPMENT BANK ORIENTED WITH THE BULK OF HIS RESPONSIBILITIES BEING ADB RELATED. FINALLY, WE BELIEVE IT TO BE UNSOUND ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICE FOR AN OFFICER TO RECEIVE HIS ASSIGNMENTS AND BE SUBJECT TO SUPERVISION FROM TWO ORGANIZATIONAL UNITS.

9. PARA 3(A), MOI: WE BELIEVE IT WILL BE RELATIVELY EASY TO HAVE THE MOI INCLUDE THE ADDRESS OF EXECUTING

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AGENCY. IT WILL, HOWEVER, NOT BE POSSIBLE FOR THE MOI TO INCLUDE A DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF BIDS INASMUCH AS CONTRACTOR AND EQUIPMENT BIDS CAN ONLY BE TENDERED AFTER BOARD APPROVAL OF A LOAN, THE TIME OF WHICH VARIES CONSIDERABLY AND IS UNKNOWN AT THE TIME THE MOI IS ISSUED. THERE IS NO EFFECTIVE METHOD OF PREDICTING BID DEADLINES. THE PLACEMENT OF TENDERS IS BASED ON COMPLETION OF DESIGN SPECIFICATIONS WHICH MAY TAKE UP TO TWO YEARS AFTER PROJECT APPROVAL. UNDER CURRENT PRACTICES AN EXECUTING AGENCY SENDS TWO TENDER NOTICES TO THE USG; ONE TO THE ECONOMIC COUNSELOR OF THE US EMBASSY AND THE OTHER TO THE EXPORT INFORMATION DIVISION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE.

10. PARA 3(B) CRITIQUE: AS MENTIONED IN PARA 5 ABOVE, WE BELIEVE THAT ANY MEANINGFUL ANALYSIS AND CRITIQUE OF PROCUREMENT DECISIONS WOULD HAVE TO BE DONE IN THE CAPITALS OF THE BORROWING COUNTRIES. AT THE RISK OF BELABORING THE POINT IT SHOULD BE RECOGNIZED THE ADB'S PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY IS TO MAKE SURE THAT SELECTION OF A PARTICULAR FIRM IS DONE ACCORDING TO BANK GUIDELINES (I.E., THAT THERE HAS BEEN INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING, THAT THE FIRMS ARE QUALIFIED, ETC.). THE ACTUAL RANKING AND SELECTION OF FIRMS IS DONE BY THE EXECUTING AGENCY INVOLVED.

11. PARA 3(C) CONGRESSIONAL FOLLOW UP: WE CONCUR WITH THE IDEA THAT IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO PUBLICIZE CONTRACT AWARDS OF SUCCESSFUL US BIDS. THE USADB WILL LOOK INTO WAYS OF OBTAINING THIS INFORMATION WHICH COULD THEN BE RELAYED TO US CHAMBER OF COMMERCE VIA COMMERCE DEPARTMENT.

12. PARA 3(D) DATA: WE BELIEVE THAT A DETAILED BREAK-DOWN OF ADB PROCUREMENT BY PRODUCT GROUP IS BEST OB-

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TAINED AS PART OF STUDY DISCUSSED IN PARA 5.

13. PARA 3(E) REPORTING CABLES: THE LAST TWO SENTENCES OF THIS PARAGRAPH SUGGEST THAT USADB LOOK INTO WAYS OF SUPPLEMENTING ITS NEW PROCUREMENT CABLE SERIES AS WELL AS REQUEST, AS APPROPRIATE, PROGRESS REPORTS OF MAJOR PROJECTS. SINCE THIS WOULD ENTAIL CONSIDERABLE ADDITIONAL EFFORT BY USADB STAFF, WE WOULD NEED AN ADDITIONAL USADB OFFICER.

14. USADB COMMENT: SOME OF THE PROPOSALS PRESENTED REFTEL A ARE BEING IMPLEMENTED BY USADB WITH PRESENT STAFF. OTHERS WOULD REQUIRE ADDED PERSONNEL AND ADDITIONAL EXPENDITURES, I.E., SENDING A TEAM TO STUDY A SELECTED SAMPLE OF ADB PROJECTS AND NOTABLY THAT THE USADB STAFF BE EXPANDED TO INCLUDE A PROCUREMENT SPECIALIST. IT WOULD, IN OUR VIEW, BE WORTHWHILE FOR THE INTER-AGENCY GROUP TO ASSURE ITSELF, IN THE INTEREST OF COST EFFECTIVENESS THAT (1) INCREASED EXPOSURE TO ADB ACTIVITIES WOULD, IN FACT, STIMULATE MORE BIDS BY AMERICAN FIRMS, AND (2) THAT AN ANALYSIS AND CRITIQUE OF ADB PROCUREMENT PROCEDURES WOULD EVENTUALLY HELP INCREASE OUR SHARE OF PROCUREMENT. BEFORE A CONCERTED USG EFFORT

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IS MADE TO PROMOTE GREATER US BUSINESS INTEREST IN ADB, WE SHOULD FIND OUT WHETHER AMERICAN FIRMS ARE ACTIVELY SEEKING ASIAN MARKETS. IT IS, OF COURSE, CONCEIVABLE THAT AMERICAN FIRMS ARE UNFAMILIAR WITH THE ADB PROCUREMENT POSSIBILITIES AND WOULD BE INTERESTED IN PURSUING SALES POSSIBILITIES IF THEY WERE SO AWARE. IN THIS REGARD, THE AVAILABILITY, ON A SUBSCRIPTION BASIS, OF THE MOI AND THE BUSINESS EDITION OF THE DEVELOPMENT FORUM SHOULD DO MUCH TO FAMILIARIZE US FIRMS WITH ADB AND IFI BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES. ON THE OTHER HAND, IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE THAT FIRMS MAY ALREADY BE FAMILIAR WITH ADB ACTIVITIES BUT STILL ARE NOT SUFFICIENTLY MOTIVATED TO BID.

15. IN THIS CONNECTION, WE ARE PLEASED TO NOTE THAT COMMENTS ARE BEING SOUGHT FROM THE PRIVATE SECTOR. IN OUR VIEW, WHAT IS NEEDED IS A CAREFULLY DESIGNED SURVEY WHICH SPECIFICALLY ASKS WHY CONTRACTORS AND SUPPLIERS DO NOT BID ON ADB PROJECTS AND WHAT IS REQUIRED TO INDUCE THEM TO BID ON SUCH PROJECTS. BASED ON POST COMMENTS AND FROM OUR OWN CONVERSATIONS, IT APPEARS TO US THAT THE PRIMARY OBSTACLE TO US PROCUREMENT IN THE ADB LIES IN THE TRADITIONAL OUTLOOK OF THE AMERICAN BUSINESS COMMUNITY WHICH IS ORIENTED TO THE DOMESTIC MARKET, WITH THE RESULT THAT THERE IS A LACK OF US COMMERCIAL PRESENCE THAT IS REQUIRED TO COMPETE IN ASIAN MARKETS. THE DECLINE IN THE VALUE OF THE DOLLAR SHOULD SERVE TO PROMOTE US EXPORTS IF US FIRMS ARE WILLING TO TRY TO PENETRATE THE ASIAN EXPORT MARKET.

16. WE ALSO SERIOUSLY QUESTION THE VALUE OF SENDING A TEAM FROM WASHINGTON TO ANALYZE AND CRITIQUE ADB PROCUREMENT PROCEDURES. OUR TENTATIVE FINDINGS SHOW THAT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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EVEN THOUGH US OVERALL SHARE OF ADB PROCUREMENT IS SMALL, AMERICAN FIRMS, WHEN THEY BID, WON OVER 30 PERCENT OF THE CONTRACTS. ON CONTRACTS THAT US FIRMS BID ON BUT DID NOT WIN, IT WAS FOUND THAT (1) US BIDS WERE GENERALLY HIGH; ONE FIFTH OF ALL US BIDS WERE 25 PERCENT OVER AWARD PRICE WITH ONLY EIGHT PERCENT WITHIN 10 PERCENT OF WINNING PRICE (THESE FIGURES INCLUDE ONLY THE LOWEST UNSUCCESSFUL US BID PRICE AND DO NOT REFLECT THE GREATER DISPARITY IN PRICES THAT WERE FOUND AMONG UNSUCCESSFUL US BIDDERS); AND (2) 28 PERCENT OF BIDS FROM US FIRMS WERE REJECTED FOR LACK OF RESPONSIVENESS TO TENDER REQUIREMENTS. WE ARE NOT SURE THAT A MORE INTENSIVE ANALYSIS WILL GENERATE SUFFICIENT ADDITIONAL INFORMATION TO JUSTIFY THE EFFORT. EDMOND

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